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SOC. 4.01.2 Operation
Overflight

21 AUG. 02 U-2

downed by a Russian missile and he subsequently spent two years in a Russian prison before being exchanged in 1962 for the Russian spy Rudolph Abel. Naturally, the whole thing provided the Soviet premier Khrushchev a field day at American expense and did incalculable damage to this country's international prestige.

That loss of prestige resulted not so much from the incident itself as from the American government's incredible handling of it. Governments expect other governments to spy on them and are in the espionage business themselves. Also, spies are quite often caught. Where the points are lost, apparently, is in the way in which the spies are caught--and in Powers' case it has a nightmarish lunatic quality like something out of the movie M-A-S-H.

The CIA made the erroneous assumption the U-2 mission was too high to be picked up by Russian radar. They didn't believe the Russians had a missile which could reach it in any case. The mission was flown on the eve of a delicate summit conference (which naturally, the Russians canceled) in Paris. When the news broke, an obviously uninformed American president first denied it had happened and then broke down and confessed all. Finally, Powers, who after all was not hired for his James Bond qualities but for his ability as a pilot, was given confusing instructions as to what to tell his captors if he did fall into their hands.

If there is a tone of bitterness in Powers' account it is understandable. Perhaps he was able, as he says, to conceal from the Russians certain vital information, but the American public was allowed to get the impression that he had spilled everything and by the time he was exchanged some newspapers, congressmen, and the general public appeared to think the whole thing had been his fault. The fact is, he was a good deal more to be pitied than censured. The censure belongs elsewhere--much higher up the ladder.



Powers and Family

Appalling Series of Boo-boos Hurt American Credibility

Reviewed by
CHESTER GOOLRICK
OPERATION OVER-
FLIGHT. By Francis Gary
Powers (with Curt Gentry).
Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
\$6.95.

IN AN ACCOUNT which has undoubtedly been hand-launched by the CIA and which leaves a lot of questions unanswered, Virginian Francis Gary Powers here tells of the

famous U-2 incident which first hit the headlines when his aircraft was shot down over Russia during what American intelligence authorities has fatuously thought to be a secret photography-spy mission.

To put it in the kindest possible tones, it is the story of such an appalling build-up of bad judgment based on thinking which would hardly do credit to a mule that one is

led to begin to understand how only a short time later the CIA was able to back the Bay of Pigs disaster in Cuba. If, taken together, the two affairs are a measure of the efficiency of America's intelligence systems, they help explain a lot of things.

The U-2 incident is too well known, and too painful, to need much recounting. On an overflight across Russia on May 1, 1960, Powers' U-2 was